time during the year, in addition to the proposals given under the Annual Plan, which would be considered on merit.

As regards opening of bank branches by Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), it is mandatory for RRBs to seek prior approval/licence from RBI before opening of new branches/offices. The Boards of Directors of RRBs are required to decide on the policy and strategy for setting up new branches, taking into account the yearly business plan, potential for business at the new centres, (for opening of branches), profitability of the proposed branches, efficacy of the internal control system, redeployment of staff where surplus manpower has been identified, extension of prompt and cost-effective customer service to the clintele etc.

While processing the applications for opening of branches, RBI gives weightage to the nature and scope of banking facilities particularly in underbanked areas.

(b) and (c) The population Group-wise classification of bank centres is based on population figures as per 2001 census and for the purpose of the definition/cut-off size of population the 'Rural' Group includes centres with population less than 10,000, and 'Semi-Urban' Group includes centres with population of 10,000 and above but less than 1 lakh.

(d) and (e) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Strikes by employees of Public Sector Banks

1941. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for resorting to strikes by the employees of public sector banks during the last one year including their demands;

(b) whether Government proposes to consider their demands;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether Government proposes to fix a profit for every branch of the banks to be achieved by them in a year alongwith their social responsibilities;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) The Associate Banks Officers Association & All India Bank Employee Associations went on strike on 3rd and 4th December, 2007 to oppose the proposed merger of State Bank of Saurashtra and other associate banks with State Bank of India. On the call of United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), the employees of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) went on strike for a day on the 25th January, 2008 in support of their demands, namely, opposing merger of PSBs; second option for pension; restoration of compassionate scheme; recruitment in PSBs; stoppage of outsourcing; and early settlement of wage revision. An understanding was reached between Indian Banks' Association and UBFU on the 25th February, 2008 whereby both parties agreed to set a definite time frame for holding discussions on each of the issues.

(e) to (g) The Government of India has put in place a mechanism to monitor the overall performance of all Public Sector Banks (PSBs) on the basis of the 'Statement of Intent on Annual Goals (SOI)' submitted by them on various performance parameters including

deposits, advances, non-performing assets (NPAs), cost to income ratio, return on assets (ROA), profit, etc. Further, PSBs are required to lend at least 40 per cent of their Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) to the priority sector. Within this overall target, banks are required to lend 18 per cent of ANBC to agriculture sector and 10 per cent of ANBC to the weaker sections.

Norms for filing GR/SDF

1942. SHRI RAJNITI PRASAD: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether GR/SDF is not required to be filed in case of small export shipments;

(b) what are the details in this regard including the notification/master circular number and contents thereof;

(c) whether custom officials at airport/sea strictly follow relevant instruction in this regard;

(d) if not, what action is proposed for implementation of these instructions;

(e) whether there is any proposal under consideration to raise the limit of the F.O.B. value of the export shipment for non-filing of GR/SDF; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir. GR/SDF from is not required to be filed in respect of export of goods and software of value not exceeding USD 25,000 or its equivalent.

(b) The above exemption from furnishing of GR/SDF declaration has been given under Regulation 4(d) of the Foreign Exchange Management (Export of Goods and Services) Regulations, 2000. The relevant instructions have been issued by Reserve Bank of India *vide* A.P. (DIR Series) Circular No. 61 dated 31st January, 2004 and Notification No. FEMA. 116/2004-RB dated 25th March, 2004.

(c) Yes, Sir. Government has issued instructions to the Customs field formations *vide* Circular No. 53/2004-Customs dated 13th October, 2004 and instructions in F No. 450/25/2005-Cus. IV dated 29th March, 2005 for strictly following the RBI's aforesaid Circular and Notification.

(d) Does not arise in view of the reply at (c) above.

(e) Presently, there is no such proposal with the Government.

) Does not arise in view of the reply at (e) above.

Grant of additional pension as recommended by Fifth Pay Commission

1943. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Fifth Pay Commission recommendation with regard to grant of additional pension at the rate of one percent per year to those Central Government employees who have rendered more than 33 years of service with effect from 1st January, 1996, could not be accepted due to paucity of funds at that time;